

THE BAPTIST Record

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Answer
His Call Tell
His Story
Change
Your World

Week of Prayer
for North American Missions

Suggested Dates: March 6-13, 2005

ANNIE
ARMSTRONG
EASTER OFFERING®
FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

National Goal: \$55,000,000

Miss. couple reaching into inner city

PORTLAND, Ore. (Special) — Churches are built on relationships, and few people in the Pacific Northwest are better at cultivating friends and building relationships than missionary Troy Smith.

A soft-spoken Mississippian by birth, Smith has become a master of understanding the human condition and how people develop lifestyles that are self-destructive to themselves and those they love. Smith steps into those quagmires of defeatism characterized by drug, alcohol, and other dependencies with a Bible in one hand and a tried-and-proven approach to spiritual rehabilitation through Christ.

Smith and his wife, Jamae, are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 6-13 Week of Prayer and North American Mission Study, which this year focuses on the theme Answer His Call.

Smith first came to Oregon as a church starter in 1978 after discussing his call with the director of missions for Interstate Association. He was told the association had a piece of property with "no people, no congregation, no salary, but with a \$55,000 debt."

"I knew that's where God wanted me to go, even though I tried to talk him out of it for a while. But within a week my wife and



IN PRAYER — Mississippians Troy (second from right) and Jamae (right) Smith join in a prayer group's special time recently in Portland, Oregon. Prayer is vital to the success of the Smiths' ministry to alcohol and drug addicts in the Portland area. Their ministry is supported by gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. (Special photo)

I resigned our church and moved to Portland, and I knew I was home. I was where God wanted me to be," he explains.

Smith served as founding pastor of Jackson Church for five years until he became an evangelist from 1983-85. That's when things began to happen that reshaped his ministry.

Although his life was fulfilling, he was challenged by Portland's growing population of men and women who were looking for fulfillment through destructive behavior. It was a people group largely ignored by churches because they didn't know how to respond — a people group composed of many who lived in the inner city and who had become addicted to drugs and alcohol.

Smith became increasingly concerned that churches were moving out of the inner city almost as fast as others were moving in. He was disheartened by the spiritual void that was being created by the slow exodus of the very salt and light that should have found new opportunities for ministry.

"I felt we should go to those people rather than abandoning them as I saw more and more churches move to the suburbs. Many of those churches left simply because they didn't know how to deal with the problems of the inner city," he says.

Smith tried to help the association recruit a pastor, but no one stepped forward.

When he was told it was virtually impossible to start a church in downtown Portland that would become self-sustaining, he again prayed about it but couldn't shake the conviction that it was where God was leading him.

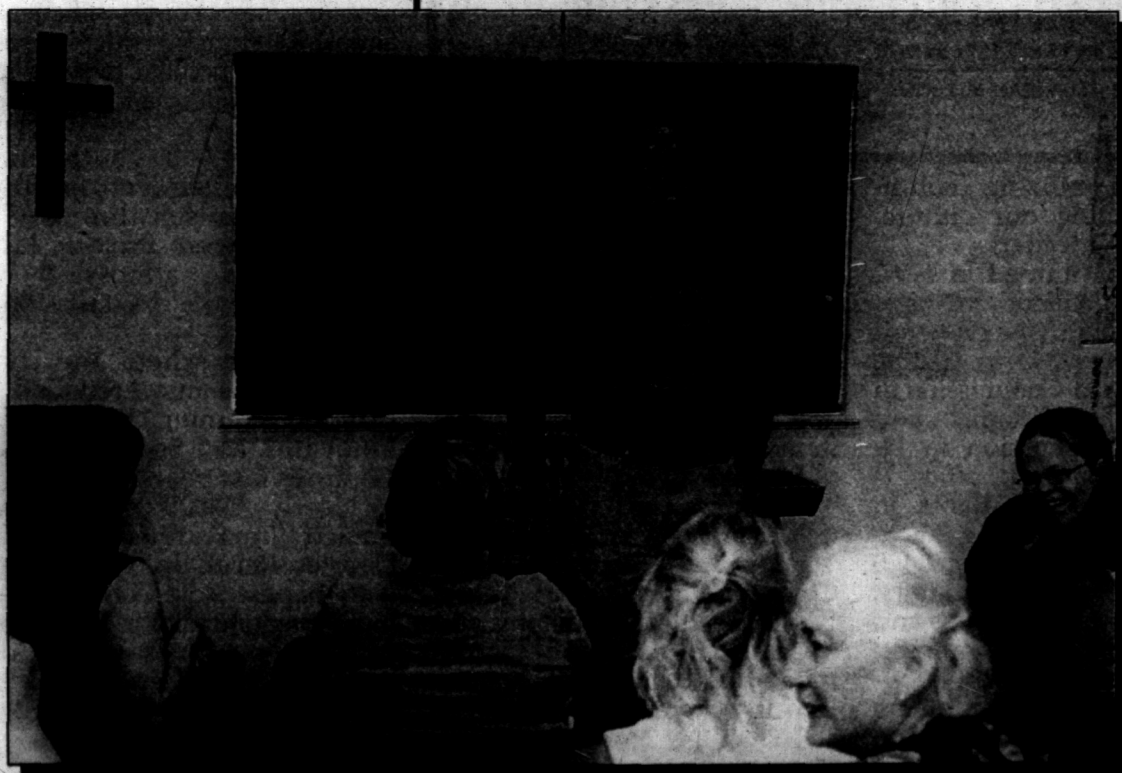
"I wanted to start a church that was more than a rescue mission. Many told me that it would never be self-supporting, but I felt God knew better; I just had to find the way he wanted it to be done."

He had left the suburban church to enter evangelism full-time, but took a detour from that ministry to join the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) as a missionary to the inner city. He would not be guaranteed an appointment beyond three years "because no one lasted that long in the inner city," he explains.

Smith opened the Baptist Revival Center in downtown Portland for counseling and worship services. He listened to stories of wasted lives and sharing the gospel with the city's rejected residents. It was the first good news many had heard in a long time.

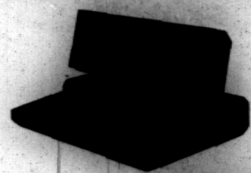
"I keep asking myself if those who I led to Christ were really saved, why did they keep slipping back into their old lifestyles? Then God gave me the objectives which became the foundation of what is now known as SAFE — Setting Addicts Free Eternally.

The goal of SAFE is not sobriety, Smith is quick to point out. The goal is for each person who completes the course to become a productive, healthy, child of God. "If you sober up a thief you still have a thief. But if you change him from the inside, you no longer have a thief," he says.



TRAVELER — Smith travels across the country sharing the concept of SAFE with churches and community-based ministries. His Portland-based ministry, called SAFE — Setting Addicts Free Eternally — has been translated into Spanish and has even been successful in Ukraine. (Special photo)

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Abortion: crashing into the truth (again)

Among the many fatuous arguments promulgated by the pro-death, pro-abortion political lobby is that the vast majority of "fetuses" ("babies" to you and me) that are killed in abortions each year could not have survived outside their mother's wombs anyway, so what's the big deal?

Like the inane trimester system of gestational development crafted by the U.S. Supreme Court — a concept that can only be described as a laughingstock at most medical schools — and the "Fetuses aren't developed enough to feel pain during an abortion" contention that has been disproven by modern ultrasound, the abortionists' latest lie has crashed headlong into the truth.

Rumaisa Rahman was born by emergency caesarean section at 26 weeks gestation on September 19, 2004, at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, Illinois, when her 23-year-old mother was stricken with severe preeclampsia (extreme high blood pressure during pregnancy). Rumaisa, barely six months from her conception, was less than ten inches long at birth and weighed 8.6 ounces — about the weight of an average soft drink in a can or a cell phone.

Her fraternal twin sister, Hiba, was born at the same time and weighed one pound, four ounces. Hiba, although incredibly small herself, was well within the capabilities of premature care in today's medical world. The previous record for the world's smallest baby was also held by Loyola University Medical Center: 9.9 ounces at 27 weeks.

"We are very excited about this case because all the studies seem to suggest that she will develop normally," said Johnathan Muraskas, professor of pediatrics and neonatal and perinatal medicine at the Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. "Ultrasounds have shown that

Rumaisa's head is normal and there is no bleeding in her brain, which is a common complication that can put a baby at risk for cerebral palsy."

Both Rumaisa and Hiba have already undergone laser surgery to ward off future vision problems, another common complication. "We anticipate an excellent visual prognosis," Muraskas said.

Rumaisa was discharged from Loyola University Medical Center on February 8, weighing a hefty 5 pounds, eight ounces.

Loyola University Medical Center is among the leaders in caring for extremely premature infants. According to the National Institutes of Health, more than 1,700 newborns weighing less than two pounds have been admitted to the hospital in the past 20 years, with a survival rate of 90% of those born at 27 weeks gestation or longer. The medical center is by no means alone in accomplishing these medical miracles.

We are constantly pushing back the time period during which a baby can survive premature birth. The future holds great promise in this area of medical research. It is a sad fact, however, that in America, little Rumaisa (and her sister) could have been exterminated for any reason — or no reason at all — in the forceps of an abortionist who is legally entitled to practice his perverse craft throughout the full nine months of gestation. After all, no baby had ever survived at Rumaisa's birthweight and she



Rumaisa Rahman at birth

wouldn't have felt any pain during the abortion procedure. Right?

It's not really a baby; it's a blob of unformed tissue. Right? It's just a "product of conception" until it draws its first breath. Right? It would just be another mouth to feed in an overpopulated world. Right? We can hold down the societal burdens created by raising children. Right? We can even control birth defects. Right? The constitutional right of privacy extends to abortion. Right?

We've heard all of these excuses for legal abortion many times before. When you next encounter abortion extremists offering the same tired arguments listed above or even more simple-minded misrepresentations, ask them if they've ever heard of Rumaisa Rahman and then give thanks for the incredible gift of life that she enjoys.

All the bloviations of the powerful pro-abortion lobby won't be able to stand up to her 8.6 ounces of pure truth.

Facts about North American missions today

- Most North American Mission Board (NAMB) missions personnel are jointly funded with state Baptist conventions, associations and churches, and receive support from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®. The 2005 goal is \$55 million — 100% of which will directly support missionaries and their ministries.

- Total gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering in 2004 exceeded \$53.8 million. Since its inception, more than one billion dollars has been given through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

- Forty-four percent of NAMB's \$120 million budget comes from AAEO and 36% from the Cooperative Program.
- NAMB's primary responsibility is to assist Southern Baptist churches reach the United States, Canada, and their territories with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The agency provides assistance to churches, associations, and state conventions in church planting and evangelism, including soul-winning training, interfaith witness, and church and community ministries. Six priority emphases of NAMB are sharing Christ, starting churches, sending mis-

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sionaries, mobilizing volunteers, impacting our culture, and equipping leaders.

- NAMB was formed in 1997, and is the successor organization of the Home Mission Board (which began in 1845) in Atlanta, the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, and Radio and Television Commission in Ft. Worth. The national office is now located near Atlanta in Alpharetta, Georgia.

- 5,126 missionaries, 2,400 chaplains (serving in military, institutions such as prisons and hospitals, and in corporate settings), and hundreds of thousands of mission volunteers (e.g., World Changers, Mission Service Corps missionaries) are seeking to reach the estimated 235 million unbelievers in the United States and Canada.

- Southern Baptists have a goal of starting more than 2,000 churches each year.

- Church and community ministries such as Alternatives for Life, literacy missions, Baptist center ministries, week day ministries, and immigration and hunger ministries, results in more than 33,000 professions of faith each year.

- The Strategic Focus Cities (SFC) emphasis for 2005 is New York City. Through SFC, Chicago, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Boston, Seattle, Philadelphia and Miami have been sites of concentrated and intentional evangelism and church planting efforts. To date, the North American Mission Board's SFC emphasis has yielded, 47,000 professions of faith, 336 church starts, and more than 40,000 volunteers.

- All six Southern Baptist seminaries and the Canadian Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have Nehemiah Project mission professors in place. Because of this partnership to mobilize new church planters, almost 900 church planter interns have been appointed to serve in summer, semester, and full-time capacities.

- About 24,000 youth and adults were involved in missions and ministry through 87 World Changers projects last year, leading almost 2,000 people to make decisions for Christ.

- 1,782 high school and college students answered God's call as Summer, Sojourner, Innovator, and Semester missionaries last year.

- Nearly 29,000 people are trained in Southern Baptist Disaster Relief. In partnership with Baptist state conventions, more than one million meals are served annually to victims of disasters. In the past 10 years, more than 12 million meals were served in the name of Christ.

Information provided by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Former teacher brings hope to community

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Grace McGraw ends the tutoring lesson and says goodbye to her young student. She steps outside to get a breath of fresh air and is reminded of where her obedience to God has brought her.

McGraw had been used to teaching school in an affluent section of Birmingham to nicely dressed children of parents in a community known as Vestavia Hills. Her work environment was pleasant, grass covered the lawns and streets were well maintained.

Today she stands outside the M-POWER Ministries building where she guides a staff providing new hope to a community riddled by social and economic problems.

As she looks down the street she reflects how far she has come in the past five years. Her world is far more complicated with problems caused by crowded public schools where children encounter gangs, drugs are offered as a way to escape reality, and prostitution is common. Her office is now located on the edge of a high-crime community known as Woodlawn/Avondale and, she says, she may as well be serving in a Third World country due to the economic, cultural, and social barriers she has had to overcome.

"The community is not that far away from Vestavia Hills, just a short 15-minute drive, but it is a world away. For all practical purposes, the Lord picked me up from my comfortable career and dropped me in the middle of a foreign land," she says matter-of-factly.

"It's a good thing He didn't reveal to me what He had in



NEW HOPE — North American missionary Grace McGraw (center) taught school 28 years in an affluent section of Birmingham before retiring, but God called her out of retirement to the inner city where she now provides new hope through a variety of activities including an after-school program supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. (Special photo)

mind or I'm not sure I would have been as willing to follow Him."

McGraw and her husband John are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 6-13 Week of Prayer and North

American Mission Study, which this year focuses on the theme Answer His Call.

For 28 years McGraw had served as a schoolteacher and had plans to keep going for two more years to round it out at 30. She could have retired at 25 years but saw no need. She was happy, she enjoyed her job, and she was content with the world she had built for herself.

At 52 years of age she felt a call to retire and, after a season of resistance and rationalization, heeded the call. "My parents always taught me to be sensitive to that small, still voice of the Lord's leading. They believed in it and instilled that value in me from my early years, and that's why I'm here today, totally out of my element," she adds.

"I retired with no clear direction of what I would be doing. I was not ready to retire and was enjoying what I was doing. I felt I was where the

Lord wanted me to be. 'Why would He change that?'" she remembers asking herself.

Shortly after turning in her letter of resignation, she learned from her pastor about a new ministry that would be started by the Birmingham Baptist Association and several churches. Her congregation, Dawson Memorial Church in Birmingham, was one of those churches partnering to bring the ministry to reality.

When she heard the new executive director speak, she could not shake the impression that she would be a part of the ministry — but as a volunteer, not as a full-time employee.

Today, five years later, she oversees 20 volunteers and a popular after-school tutoring ministry that gives at-risk children the opportunity to reverse the cycle of poverty and hopelessness that has characterized their lives since birth. The ministry does not just relate to children but to their parents, as well.

Annie Armstrong's story



Armstrong

The woman for whom the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions was named lived from 1850-1938, but her boldness and commitment to missions during her lifetime continue to serve as a model for today. Her strong commitment to taking the gospel to Native Americans and immigrants came as a result of listening to missionaries' stories about the needs of these groups. She personalized that commitment by serving her church and leading women to minister to immigrants arriving at the Baltimore pier. She also traveled to Indian territory to minister personally to the Native Americans. While she could not be hands-on all the time, she encouraged women to make up boxes of supplies for missionaries in order that they could be better equipped to take the gospel to all people. Annie also served as the first corresponding secretary of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), which began in 1888. It was a job she did wholeheartedly and without pay. Writing about her work, Annie said: "I am more and more persuaded that all that is required of those who have the work in charge is faithful seed sowing. The harvest is bound to follow. No matter how heavy the burden, daily strength is given, so I expect we need not give ourselves any concern as to what the outcome will be, but think 'go forward.'" (Sorrill, Bobbie. *Annie Armstrong: Dreamer in Action*, 1984, Broadman Press, p. 155.) Annie indeed "went forward" with her support of missions. Her capacity to write letters advocating mission work has been well documented. She wrote literally thousands of letters every year, and in one year alone that number topped 18,000. She spoke in churches to spark the interest of women to take seriously a commitment to missions and support Southern Baptist missionaries. It was fitting that the offering which benefited the missionaries she so dearly loved and supported was named in her honor in 1936. Annie Armstrong died in 1938, and her tombstone reads, "She hath done what she could."

Looking back

10 years ago

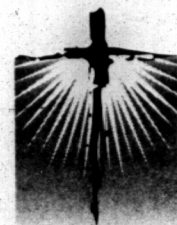
Some state Baptist conventions, including Mississippi, could be encouraged to take on complete funding and management of mission work within their borders — a dramatic change in the way Southern Baptist have done missions, according to a SBC study committee.

20 years ago

First Church, McComb, announces that members will help build a new church in the Sawhill Road area of Columbus, Ohio, where 30,000 people live without a single Southern Baptist church nearby.

50 years ago

The 1955 Convention-Wide Simultaneous Evangelistic Crusade will get underway March 6, it has been determined by Chester L. Quarles, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board executive secretary.



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**THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE**

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Immigrant leading church planting effort

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Special) — Unlike most Hispanic immigrants, when Carlos and Cristina De La Barra arrived in the United States with their three daughters 14 years ago, they weren't searching for a more prosperous life — but a more fulfilling one.

Actually, life was quite comfortable for the De La Barra family in their native Santiago, Chile, where Carlos owned a successful computer company.

"For years, we made really good money," De La Barra said. "We traveled all around the world. But after a while, again and again, I had the same feeling of emptiness. I tried to kill this emptiness by working 20 hours a day seven days a week."

It wasn't until he met a Southern Baptist missionary who was starting a church in his neighborhood that De La Barra began to realize that he was empty spiritually. Over the next year, the two families became friends, sharing meals

together regularly. Then during a Saturday morning breakfast at a hotel restaurant in Santiago, De La Barra prayed with the missionary pastor to receive Christ as his Lord and Savior.

De La Barra's prayerful commitment to Christ was the first step on a journey that has since taken him and his family from South America to help start Southern Baptist churches in Hispanic communities in South Carolina, Indiana and Kentucky.

The De La Barras are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 6-13 Week of Prayer, which focuses on the theme Answer His Call.

"I am a Christian because a Christian family from South Carolina went to Chile as Southern Baptist missionaries to bring the gospel to our people," De La Barra said. "As a Catholic, I always felt guilty of something and never felt sure of my salvation."

Shortly after his commitment to follow Christ, De La Barra began accompanying the missionary pastor on ministry visits as well as helping him start another church. "He started teaching me without telling me that he was teaching me," he said.

As their friendship grew, the De La Barra family vacationed with the missionary family in the United States by helping them minister to the Hispanic community in Greenville, S.C.

"Here in the United States, we realized the great needs of the Hispanic community," De La Barra recalled. "They had spiritual, social, financial needs, and a lack of help and hope. We felt the call to serve them and help them where they live and in their own language."

Before moving to the United

States to attend seminary, Carlos and Cristina — who had been a Christian since childhood — began preparing their three daughters, two of whom were teenagers at the time, for a drastic lifestyle change.

"We knew that when we came here, I would not have a big salary," De La Barra said. "We would not have a really expensive place to live."

So they moved out of their spacious home and rented a small apartment in Chile for a year before moving to Greenville, S.C., where De La Barra spent a year studying English in preparation for seminary. "My extended family still cannot understand why I quit my job, and left everything to come here," he said.

Following his graduation from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky in 1996, De La Barra joined the North American Mission Board as a Hispanic church planter. While a seminary student, he helped start Hispanic churches in neighboring Indiana.

A major challenge in starting Hispanic churches, De La Barra said, is it can be a slow process because most migrant families come to Kentucky from Mexico and are largely illiterate and highly transient.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS — North American missionary Carlos De La Barra (right) visits with church members Steve and Leticia Meredith after intense storms damaged their home. De La Barra knows God has called him to minister to Hispanics in central Kentucky in their own language. His ministry is supported by gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. (Special photo)

"Most of the people I'm serving here are not well educated," said De La Barra, who also has an MBA degree. "We have a lot of farms in Kentucky and a lot of Americans don't like to do these jobs, and Mexicans come to do these jobs. ... They live in places that no one else will."

Hispanics, however, are increasingly pursuing full-time or permanent jobs in the construction, landscaping, retail, or restaurant industry instead of seasonal farm labor. De La Barra said that while more Hispanic families are migrating to the United States and planting roots, they're largely reluctant to make long-term commitments.

"It's hard to start a church when everybody is thinking about returning to Mexico," he said. "It takes about 10 years for them to realize that maybe they will never go back to Mexico to live."

De La Barra believes Kentucky's Hispanic population is more than 200,000 but readily admits the number could be much higher because most come to the states illegally. He serves Hispanic communities in central Kentucky between Louisville and Lexington. Over the past six years, the number of Hispanic congregations has more than tripled.

De La Barra mentors and trains local Hispanic pastors much the same way he was trained in Chile, by having men in the local churches regularly assist him with worship services and baptisms.

"Most of our training here in Kentucky is one-on-one," he said. "We show them how to do it and then let them try, and then we move out. ... We are trying to create a Bible institute in Kentucky in Spanish for our people."

Everywhere he ministers, De La Barra emphasizes the importance of supporting missions prayerfully, financially and actively.

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Speaker



Matt Chandler
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Right off the bat let me say that I really do not want to be guilty of complaining about complainers, but to be honest there are some people who complain about everything. At times I think it is an infectious disease that works on us, and at other times it appears to be cultivated orneriness in some of us. Obviously, there are degrees of complaining. Some people have carried it to new and exalted heights.

Recently, I was talking with one of our associational mission directors and he was telling me about some good things that were happening in their association of churches. Then he added, "There are always going to be a few people grumbling about something." I smiled and nodded, "Yes," and he said, "Why, you could hang them with a new rope, and they would still complain." I had never heard that in my life, but I guess he was right.

I am fairly confident that nearly all of us complain about something, sometime or other. I am also fairly sure that when we complain, most of us don't realize that we are complaining as much as we actually are. Even church folks complain. We may not be the worst complainers, but sometimes we rank right up there among the world class complainers.

During a particularly bad season, Coach John McKay, the legendary coach of UCLA, was asked about the execution of his team. He quipped, "I am in favor of it." When LSU hired a new athletic director he said at his first press conference that the first thing he was going to do was expand all the travel expenses of the teams so that when LSU traveled to



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Starkville they could afford to get hotel rooms without a view. Jake Gather, the legendary coach of Florida A&M during the 60's, was asked, "What kind of player do you look for when you go out recruiting?" He said, "I look for guys that are hostile, mobile, and agile."

It is not unusual to be told what a waitress said to me recently. She said she dreaded working on Sunday. It was not because she had to miss church or even because she had to work when other folks were not working. She said, "Church people gripe the most about the service and tip the least." Can you imagine what it looks like and feels like to somebody working in a restaurant and here comes this avalanche of church folks through the door grumbling, demanding, complaining, and growling about every aspect of the service?

It is amazing how little of our worship stays with us. We are out the door of the church, into the car, and on to a place to eat where we convey the wrong message to a waitress who may be having a tough day any way. We go from an atmosphere of welcoming folks to our Sunday School, to greeting folks in our worship service, to going out of our way to make people feel welcome in the congregation of God's children, and then we turn around and forget it

all as we treat a waitress with disdain and fuss about everything that she does or doesn't do. That is not a good witness.

It is not as though we are the first generation of complainers to come along in God's family. No, there have been plenty of others. I suppose the quintessential complainers were the children of Israel, who apparently had developed their griping gifts to the highest form. They mumbled and grumbled because they wanted out of Egypt. Then they griped when they got out in the desert. Traveling on their way to the Promise Land, they fussed about the food. I'm talking about manna from heaven. When God gave them gourmet meals (quail), they grumbled about how that didn't suit them.

If folks today seem to be fickle about leadership and belly-ache about following, just think about those folks. They did not like the taskmasters in Egypt. They doggedly questioned and disagreed with Moses' leadership. While Moses was on the mountain, they became convinced they needed to change leaders. They thought, "If we can just get the right man, God will lead us through this." Aaron exerted his leadership and they were sure in a mess, and then when Moses died they moaned and groaned for weeks.

Before you go off on a complaining spree, remember these important facts:

- Complaining is never as effective as concern, to bring about change and good.

- Constant complaining does not reveal your insights about a situation so much as it shows your negative attitude and your insensitive spirit.

- A complaining spirit violates a basic spiritual principle. Paul gave these instructions in I Th. 5:18 — "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This verse does not mean so much that we are to go around mouthing words like, "Thank you God that my child is sick, thank you for the flat tire, and thank you that I lost my job." It does instruct us to understand that we can live in confidence, trust, and even thanksgiving knowing that God is going to be with us, supply our every need, and provide for the future. He is the God who can bring blessings when it appears you are cursed. He can bring good out of bad. He can turn things around in a moment of time, though it may take years to get there. He is a God who understands all of the features of the complexities of our lives from the beginning and far into the future. He understands and desires our confidence more than our complaints.

The wise man of the Old Testament may have instructed us best when he said, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thy own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths" (Pr. 3:5-6).

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

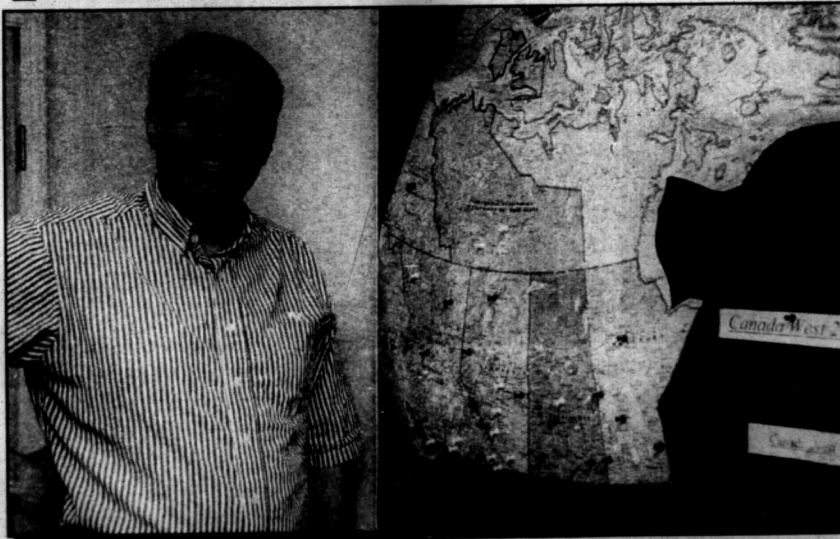
Missionary planting new churches in Canada

COCHRANE, ALBERTA — Dwight Huffman climbs up a hill and looks down on the town below. The cool Canadian breeze ruffles his hair as he surveys the environment, a vast wooded area untouched by development — until now.

What had been pristine wilderness is now slowly being transformed into the town of Chestermere, a rapidly growing community 15 kilometers from Calgary. With the trained eye of a seasoned pro, Huffman makes a mental note of the community of about 5,000 and asks himself the best way to bring Christ to its residents.

"Chestermere is representative of many towns springing up around the province of Alberta. Some of these towns have no evangelical witness, but that's why we are here as Canadian Baptists. We want to discover the needs of the community and meet those needs in the name of Christ," he says.

Huffman and his wife Judy are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 6-13 Week of Prayer and



BIG RESPONSIBILITY — Southern Baptist missionary Dwight Huffman helps start churches in Western Canada, an area nearly the size of the continental United States that currently has fewer than 140 Canadian Southern Baptist churches and missions. (Special photo)

North American Mission Study, which this year focuses on the theme Answer His Call.

Huffman is no stranger to church planting. While earning his degree from Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley, California, he started two churches and served as pastor of a third before he was called to work with the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists.

Today Huffman is less of a planter and more of a scout in the vein of the old fur trappers who first trudged through the rugged terrain of Western Canada. The only difference is they were traveling by foot and looking for beavers and bears, and Huffman drives by car and visually maps the terrain for others to follow, sharing Christ.

Judy teaches sixth-grade students at Bears paw Christian School, in addition to being the vice principal of the school. She also leads a care group in their home once a week. It is a couple's care group, but more often than not, Judy is leading it without Dwight, as he is on the road, frequently for a week or two at a time.

As the strategy coordinator for Western Canada, which is made up of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories, Huffman travels about 60,000 kilometers a year in his car. His area is approximately the equivalent of the Continental United States, but has less than 140 Canadian Southern Baptist churches and missions.

"I'm responsible to see the day when every Canadian in Western Canada hears the Gospel..." he says.

Answer
His Call
Tell
His Story
Change
Your World

Week of Prayer
for North American Missions
Suggested Dates: March 6-13, 2005

ANNIE ARMSTRONG
EASTER OFFERING
FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

National Goal: \$55,000,000

JUST FOR THE RECORD

1. **First Church, McLaurin**, Royal Ambassador's sponsored a spaghetti dinner fundraiser on February 6, to follow morning services. All proceeds will go toward RAs activities.

2. **First Church, McLaurin**, Brotherhood held a cookout fundraiser dinner on February 12. Several from the church participated with preparation and serving. All proceeds went to the building fund.

3. **First Church, McLaurin**, youth held a sweetheart banquet with a special dinner and entertainment. Youth participated as waiters and hostesses. All proceeds will be allocated for youth activities.

4. **First Church, McLaurin**, WMU began sponsoring a cake/garage sale on Jan. 29 with proceeds going toward the Lottie Moon Missions. The sale is ongoing and located at Hwy. 49 N. South Flea Market. Contact Shirley Headley at (601) 583-9212 for more information.

5. **Clarke Association, Quitman**, exceeded their goal of \$62,000.00 by raising \$77,935.21 for the Lottie Moon Offering.

6. **West Ellisville Church, Ellisville**, will host the Palmetto State Quartet/Andres Ishee homecoming with Living Water Quartet and The Next Generation, Mar. 13, 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken. For information, call (601) 477-9333.

7. **First Church, Starkville**, will honor Kermit and Phyllis McGregor for 50 years in ministry Mar. 12, 2-4 p.m. Letters from church members and friends can be sent to the church at 106 East Lampkin St., Starkville, MS, 39759, or via e-mail at office@fbcstark.org.

8. **Springfield Church, Morton**, honored Mazie Dye with a reception after serving as secretary-treasurer since 1978.

9. **Springfield Church, Morton**, recently exceeded their Lottie Moon goal of \$6,700 by giving over \$8,700. The offering was given in memory of Jeffery Wade who recently lost his life in an auto accident and had dreams of becoming an IMB missionary.

10. **Diamondhead Church, Diamondhead**, will celebrate 25 years of ministry with special services Mar. 6 at 10:30 a.m. Call (228) 255-3348 for information.

11. **Spring Hill Church, Hazlehurst**, licensed Patrick Perkins to preach on Jan. 10. Shown are Perkins, wife Jennifer, and Albert Parsons, pastor.

12. **Calvary Church, Pascagoula**, met their Lottie Moon offering goal by raising over \$2,250.00. The knit stocking caps were sent to the Casa

Hogar Orphanage in Matamoros, Mexico. Shown in front of the 150 knit caps are Dot Bartlett and Merle Ivy, president of Women on Mission.

13. The Care Group of **Calvary Church, Pascagoula**, prepared Christmas baskets for the homebound and shut-ins under the direction of care leader Christine Grubs, shown far right.

14. The children's choir of **Goss Church, Columbia**, presented Sing A Song, a Christmas musical, on Dec. 19.

15. **Dumas Church, Guntown**, Acteens assisted volunteers at the Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Collection drop-off site located at the church.

16. **Canaan Church, Columbus**, is having a note-burning ceremony on Sun., Mar. 13, at 2 p.m., with a pot luck luncheon fellowship at 11:30 a.m. after morning worship. Royal Ambassadors will provide musical entertainment. The love offering will be donated to the Annie Armstrong Easter offering.

17. **Westwood Church, Meridian**, held a baby dedication on Feb. 13. Shown are William, Amy, and C.W. Rogers and their pastor Richie Davis.

18. A concert featuring The Lesters of St. Louis, will be held at **Antioch Church, Union**, on Thurs., Mar. 10 at 7 p.m. A love offering will be received. For more information, contact James Young at (601) 986-8771.

19. Barefoot Ministries, in conjunction with **Morrison Heights Church, Clinton**, is hosting a dessert theater show Mar. 12, 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5 and are available through the youth ministries office or at the door.

20. **Calvary Church, Jackson**, will host an organ recital featuring Charles Echols, professor of music at St. Cloud State University, Minn., Mar. 6, 3 p.m. The concert is free and open to the public.

21. **Hebron Church, Pheba**, is sponsoring a blood drive Mar. 7, 2-7 p.m., at the Hebron Christian School gym. Call (662) 494-7513, (662) 492-5835, or (662) 492-9510 for information.

22. **Griffith Memorial Church, Jackson**, will celebrate a note burning Mar. 13, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will be served after the service.

23. **Gold City in concert**, **Zion Hill Church, Wesson**, Mar. 13, 3 p.m. General admission \$12; \$15 at the door. For information call (601) 643-5145.

24. The Master's Vessels in concert, **Wiggins Church, Carthage**, Mar. 5, 6:00 p.m. A love offering will be taken. For more information, contact Don Ray at (601) 267-5337.

25. **Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie**, recently licensed Michael Stevenson to the Gospel ministry. He is available for pulpit supply; call (601) 854-8430 or (601) 278-1496.

26. **Emmanuel Church, Biloxi**, will host their 7th annual reunion April 23-24. For information, call Bobby Menius at (228) 388-5609 or e-mail BREME-NIUS@cs.com.



11. Patrick Perkins Licensed to Preach



12. Lottie Moon Knit Cap Fundraiser for Orphanage



13. Calvary Church, Pascagoula, Care Group



14. Goss Church, Children's Choir



15. Acteens of Dumas Church, Guntown



17. Westwood Church, Meridian, Baby Dedication

COLLEGE NEWS

1. The William Carey College Speech and Debate team finished third overall at the Louisiana State University Mardi Gras Swing Tournament held recently in Monroe. The group will also compete in the National Pi Kappa Delta Forensics Tournament in March in St. Louis, Mo. Students interested in auditioning for the forensics team can call (601) 318-6775 or (800) 962-5991, ext. 218, for more information.

2. Baylor University, Waco, Tex., is sponsoring a conference on the future of Baptist higher education April 18 - 19, in response to several Baptist colleges and universities such as Wake Forest, Furman, and Stetson severing connections with their state conventions. Information on the conference and a registration form are available at www.baylor.edu/fbhe.

3. William Carey College (WCC) students enrolled in Diagnosis and Remediation or Reading Difficulties class celebrated the completion of another trimester of their tutoring program at Aldersgate Mission, an outreach of Main Street Methodist Church, Hattiesburg. Students used the tutoring opportunity to individually assess and evaluate the children in literacy skills.

4. Leslie Churchwell, a sophomore business administration major from Leakesville, was named Miss William Carey College recently during homecoming events held on the Hattiesburg campus.

5. WCC is sponsoring its 2005 Career Fair April 5, 1 - 4 p.m., on the Hattiesburg campus, Smith Auditorium. There will be a tailgate with complimentary refreshments and door prizes. For more information, contact Clara Reedy at (601) 318-6209.



1. William Carey College Speech and Debate Team



3. WCC Tutoring Program



7. Robertson and Stark, MC



4. Miss WCC Pageant Contestants

6. Three WCC theater students received awards at the Region IV Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival in West Palm Beach, Fla., recently. Armin Abdihodzic, Bihoc, Bosnia, received a first place award for sound design; Kristin Miller, Purvis, received a second-place award for scenic design; and Wesley Guthrie, Purvis, won a second-place award for make-up design.

7. Mississippi College (MC) student and SGA president Michael W. Robertson, River Ridge, La., and Bill P. Stark, professor of biology, Clinton, were chosen to receive the annual higher education academic achievement award, the HEDWAE, given by the Mississippi Legislature.

8. The Distinguished Speaker Series at MC will be held March 10 in the Business School's Self Hall Auditorium at 10:50 a.m., with Thomas David Landrum, Jackson, and Joe C. Morris, Jr., Madison speaking.



8. Morris



8. Landrum

REVIVALS

Calvary Church, Vicksburg, will host a spring revival on Mar. 6-9, Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m., with evangelist William "Billy" Smith from Madison and Jack Hollingsworth from Utica leading worship.

Hollandale Church, Hollandale, will host a revival Mar. 6-9 with James Nichols, pastor of First Church, Greenville, and music led by R.L. and Beth Sigrest of Yazoo City. Services: Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Friendship Church, McComb, will host a spring revival on March 11-13. Services: Fri. and Sat., 7:00 p.m.; Sun. 10:45 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., Lunch at noon. Evangelists: P.J. Weeks, Gene Douglas, and Bill Webb. Music led by Bradley White. For more information, call (601) 684-7003.

Mt. Olive Church, Smithdale, will host a revival on Mar. 6-9 with guest speaker Sonny Adkins and music led by Randy Carruth. Services: Sun., 11:00 a.m. and 1:15 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7:00 p.m.

Tate Church, Corinth, held a revival on Feb. 20-23 with 25 professions of faith/baptisms; four by letter/statement. Danny Lanier, evangelist. Gregg Thomas, pastor.

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EPOZANAOZ TNHYO
HKOM SYTA AOANKPS:
OZPO RMOZ ZA OZPO
QMFAOZ PKV ZA OZPO
NAPLAOZ UPC NAXMYIA
OMEAOZAN.

XMZK TMHN:

OZYNOC-QYD

Clue: N = R

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Four:Twenty.

Missionary points tourists, athletes to Christ

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. (Special) — Derek Spain stands in the driving snow, bracing against the harsh wind and the 15 degree temperature. Strangers ask directions and he gives a greeting, turns, and points them in the right direction.

After four hours he feels fatigued and is glad when he gets a chance to go inside to rest for a while. It's draining work to be outside in such cold temperatures, but he understands the symbolism of what he's been doing all afternoon. On one level he's serving as a volunteer for the ESPN Great Outdoor games, giving directions from the backside of a parking lot. But his real calling is to point the truly lost in the right direction of a relationship with Christ.

Spain is not a native to cold weather, having been raised in Dacula, Ga., a suburb of Atlanta. It was divine intervention which drew him and his wife Kim from a comfortable youth ministry position at Hebron Church to serve as resort missionaries for the Baptist Convention of New York.

The Spains are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 6-13 Week of Prayer and North American Mission Study, which this year focuses on the theme Answer His Call.

Spain had always been active in sports and was active in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes on his high school campus when he was growing up. So, it was natural for him to seek a position as an intern on a church staff as he fleshed out his calling. After serving on a couple of church staffs in college, Hebron called him as director of high school ministries following graduation from Georgia's Shorter College.

He eventually moved into the position of pastor of student ministries and, while a student through the New Orleans Seminary's extension classes in Atlanta, he received a call to come to Lake Placid. It was a call that forced Spain to reconsider his original calling to the pastorate.

"The Lord had to do a lot of things to get us ready for this move. But we learned that if God is calling you to go outside your comfort zone, you've got to be prepared to do it," he remembers thinking.

After much prayer and soul searching, Derek and Kim decided to follow God to New York. And that is why he was standing outside in freezing weather, helping strangers find their directions in a snowstorm.

"Lake Placid is an international sports town that excels in winter sports. It hosted the 1932 and the 1980 Winter Olympics, and averages nearly 2 million visitors each year. They have bobsled, luge, figure skating, and ski jumping events all the time. Olympic



LAKE PLACID, N.Y. — North American missionary Derek Spain (second from left) stands with Olympic hopefuls (from left) Nathan Stanbury, Nathan Kinpatrick, Emily Hart, and Deanna Burmester, who, along with hundreds of others, come to Lake Placid from across North America to train for the Winter Games. (Special photo)

athletes, who regularly train at Lake Placid, worship with us at Lake Placid Church. We also lead a Bible study at the Olympic Training Center every Tuesday night," he explains.

The church takes its ministry one step further through creative evangelism, providing home-cooked meals for athletes in training so they can get away from their rigid schedule for a couple of hours. "This is a great opportunity for them to enjoy a great meal and observe a Christian family," Spain adds.

The church was struggling with about 40 members when he arrived in November 2001, but now averages 140 in attendance.

It is currently in a building program to add a 5,700-square-foot addition that will house a half-court gym, Bible study rooms, and restrooms/showers to host mission teams.

North Country Ministries spreads the gospel three ways — through servant evangelism, creative evangelism, and personal evangelism. Spain coordinates the approaches, frequently using volunteers from states such as Georgia, Texas, Oklahoma, and Mississippi.

"Servant evangelism has provided us with a real platform to share our faith. They don't mind that we do it because we have such a gentle approach," he said.

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2005
MASTERS OF THE GOLF



Nevada missionary at home on the range

FALLON, Nev. (Special) — After a week of driving, having put 900 miles on his car, Mitch Bryant watches the sunset as he pulls into the driveway of his home. Driving between churches in Nevada is nothing like what he was used to back home in Arkansas when he would visit fellow pastors.

Now, as associational missionary for Lahontan Association, he thinks nothing of driving 175 miles to visit a church. His association is one of only four in the state and covers an area of 45,000 square miles. It includes five counties in west central Nevada and boasts of 16 churches and six missions. He bases his ministry from the town of Fallon, 60 miles east of Reno.

Bryant battles a variety of problems in trying to stitch the churches together into a Baptist quilt thrown over this part of the state. One of the biggest is the loneliness and isolation that permeates the lives of the pastors and their families.

"The population out here is really scattered. Most of our people live in population centers near a county seat, but once you get outside of the city limits you don't see many residents. There are some groups of people who live on cattle and dairy farms and ranches but those are even more isolated than the towns are," he explains.

Bryant and his wife, Sandi are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 6-13 Week of Prayer and North American Mission Study, which this year focuses on the theme Answer His Call.



MULTIPLE ROLES — Mitch Bryant (right) wears many hats as associational missionary in west central Nevada, including that of disaster relief volunteer during training in Fallon. Bryant's association encompasses 45,000 square miles as one of only four associations in the state. His ministry is supported by gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. (Special photo)

The association is 260 miles from north to south and 175 miles east to west, and that's why it's so hard to start or grow a church. Distances are such that people don't get together on a very regular basis because of the time it takes to drive. In an area where it's not uncommon to drive 60 or 100 miles to buy groceries, people socialize when they can but don't look for opportunities to spend hours behind the wheel of a car.

Bryant and Sandi, who he calls "my right hand and my left hand," serve as encouragers to pastors and their wives and help provide resources and leadership training to laity. "The distances really take a toll on the wives," Sandi Bryant explains.

"They feel forgotten so much of the time so I send birthday cards, help plan wives retreats, and be a listening ear. In the

South people talk about distances usually in terms of miles. They will say 'It's 20 miles to this location or 15 miles to that church, but out here we talk in terms of time. It's always worth the drive to be with the members of the church and the pastor and his family. We don't take fellowship for granted out here,'" she says.

That's not the way it's always been for the couple. Mitch Bryant grew up in Missouri in the home of parents who were active in their Southern Baptist church. He was studying industrial technology in college in Pittsburg, Kan., when he became active in a Baptist Student Union and met his future wife.

That's when he surrendered to the ministry and began pastoring bivocational mission churches in southeast Kansas. Following graduation from Southwestern Seminary in Fort

Worth, he moved to Arkansas where he pastored two churches.

A seminary friend who was pastor of a church in Boulder City, Nev., asked him if he would lead a revival there, and that's how he was introduced to the state. It turned out to be a fateful meeting.

While there he met Neal Myers, who was serving as director of missions in Reno, and planted the idea of Bryant moving to the state to help struggling churches. He came as a pastor and within a few years stepped into his current position as associational missionary.

"It's hard for a church to have a full-time pastor out here because the congregations are so small and the income sources are relatively scarce. By far, most of our churches are bivocational in nature.

"We have a broad range of pastors in our association. We have a 70-year-old who has been in the ministry for 50 years and we have others who have only been in the pastorate for two or three years. Churches will range in size from 10 or 12 members to 120 being our largest congregation. I'd say the average size is 40," he explains.

Nevada is among the fastest growing states in the nation, and the need for lay leadership grows with each year. Fallon is expected to double its population to 50,000 by 2010. It has one of the Navy's largest pilot training bases since the Top Gun school was moved there.

MS POSITIONS

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: First Baptist Church, Ridgeland is looking for a part-time financial secretary. Approximately 20 hours a week. Computer skills and financial training helpful. Resumes may be sent to First Baptist Church Ridgeland, 302 W. Jackson Street, Ridgeland, MS 39157.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: First Baptist Church, Ridgeland is looking for a full-time minister of music. Education and experience preferred. Interested applicants may send their resumes to First Baptist Church Ridgeland, 302 W. Jackson Street, Ridgeland, MS 39157.

CANAAN BAPTIST CHURCH, COLUMBUS, MISS., is prayerfully considering applications for the position of part-time youth director. Please submit resumes to R. Peal, 1332 Cal-Steens Road, Steens, MS 39766 or call (662) 574-0617.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY: FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC AND EDUCATION. Please mail resumes to Slayden Baptist Church, Attn: Search Committee, 2534 Hwy 72, Lamar, MS 38642. Or email to slaydenchurch@bellsouth.net. For more information call (662) 252-4559.

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OMEAOZAN.

XMZK TMHN:

OZYNOC-QYD

Clue: N = R

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Four:Twenty.

Missionary points tourists, athletes to Christ

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. (Special) — Derek Spain stands in the driving snow, bracing against the harsh wind and the 15 degree temperature. Strangers ask directions and he gives a greeting, turns, and points them in the right direction.

After four hours he feels fatigued and is glad when he gets a chance to go inside to rest for a while. It's draining work to be outside in such cold temperatures, but he understands the symbolism of what he's been doing all afternoon. On one level he's serving as a volunteer for the ESPN Great Outdoor games, giving directions from the backside of a parking lot. But his real calling is to point the truly lost in the right direction of a relationship with Christ.

Spain is not a native to cold weather, having been raised in Dacula, Ga., a suburb of Atlanta. It was divine intervention which drew him and his wife Kim from a comfortable youth ministry position at Hebron Church to serve as resort missionaries for the Baptist Convention of New York.

The Spains are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 6-13 Week of Prayer and North American Mission Study, which this year focuses on the theme Answer His Call.

Spain had always been active in sports and was active in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes on his high school campus when he was growing up. So, it was natural for him to seek a position as an intern on a church staff as he fleshed out his calling. After serving on a couple of church staffs in college, Hebron called him as director of high school ministries following graduation from Georgia's Shorter College.

He eventually moved into the position of pastor of student ministries and, while a student through the New Orleans Seminary's extension classes in Atlanta, he received a call to come to Lake Placid. It was a call that forced Spain to reconsider his original calling to the pastorate.

"The Lord had to do a lot of things to get us ready for this move. But we learned that if God is calling you to go outside your comfort zone, you've got to be prepared to do it," he remembers thinking.

After much prayer and soul searching, Derek and Kim decided to follow God to New York. And that is why he was standing outside in freezing weather, helping strangers find their directions in a snowstorm.

"Lake Placid is an international sports town that excels in winter sports. It hosted the 1932 and the 1980 Winter Olympics, and averages nearly 2 million visitors each year. They have bobsled, luge, figure skating, and ski jumping events all the time. Olympic



athletes, who regularly train at Lake Placid, worship with us at Lake Placid Church. We also lead a Bible study at the Olympic Training Center every Tuesday night," he explains.

The church takes its ministry one step further through creative evangelism, providing home-cooked meals for athletes in training so they can get away from their rigid schedule for a couple of hours. "This is a great opportunity for them to enjoy a great meal and observe a Christian family," Spain adds.

The church was struggling with about 40 members when he arrived in November 2001, but now averages 140 in attendance.

It is currently in a building program to add a 5,700-square-foot addition that will house a half-court gym, Bible study rooms, and restrooms/showers to host mission teams.

North Country Ministries spreads the gospel three ways — through servant evangelism, creative evangelism, and personal evangelism. Spain coordinates the approaches, frequently using volunteers from states such as Georgia, Texas, Oklahoma, and Mississippi.

"Servant evangelism has provided us with a real platform to share our faith. They don't mind that we do it because we have such a gentle approach," he said.

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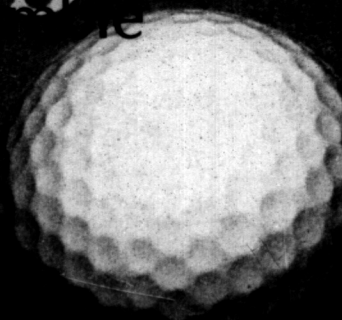


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2005



Nevada missionary at home on the range

FALLON, Nev. (Special) — After a week of driving, having put 900 miles on his car, Mitch Bryant watches the sunset as he pulls into the driveway of his home. Driving between churches in Nevada is nothing like what he was used to back home in Arkansas when he would visit fellow pastors.

Now, as associational missionary for Lahontan Association, he thinks nothing of driving 175 miles to visit a church. His association is one of only four in the state and covers an area of 45,000 square miles. It includes five counties in west central Nevada and boasts of 16 churches and six missions. He bases his ministry from the town of Fallon, 60 miles east of Reno.

Bryant battles a variety of problems in trying to stitch the churches together into a Baptist quilt thrown over this part of the state. One of the biggest is the loneliness and isolation that permeates the lives of the pastors and their families.

"The population out here is really scattered. Most of our people live in population centers near a county seat, but once you get outside of the city limits you don't see many residents. There are some groups of people who live on cattle and dairy farms and ranches but those are even more isolated than the towns are," he explains.

Bryant and his wife Sandi are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 6-13 Week of Prayer and North American Mission Study, which this year focuses on the theme Answer His Call.



MULTIPLE ROLES — Mitch Bryant (right) wears many hats as associational missionary in west central Nevada, including that of disaster relief volunteer during training in Fallon. Bryant's association encompasses 45,000 square miles as one of only four associations in the state. His ministry is supported by gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. (Special photo)

The association is 260 miles from north to south and 175 miles east to west, and that's why it's so hard to start or grow a church. Distances are such that people don't get together on a very regular basis because of the time it takes to drive. In an area where it's not uncommon to drive 60 or 100 miles to buy groceries, people socialize when they can but don't look for opportunities to spend hours behind the wheel of a car.

Bryant and Sandi, who he calls "my right hand and my left hand," serve as encouragers to pastors and their wives and help provide resources and leadership training to laity. "The distances really take a toll on the wives," Sandi Bryant explains.

"They feel forgotten so much of the time so I send birthday cards, help plan wives retreats, and be a listening ear. In the

South people talk about distances usually in terms of miles. They will say 'It's 20 miles to this location or 15 miles to that church, but out here we talk in terms of time. It's always worth the drive to be with the members of the church and the pastor and his family. We don't take fellowship for granted out here,'" she says.

That's not the way it's always been for the couple. Mitch Bryant grew up in Missouri in the home of parents who were active in their Southern Baptist church. He was studying industrial technology in college in Pittsburg, Kan., when he became active in a Baptist Student Union and met his future wife.

That's when he surrendered to the ministry and began pastoring bivocational mission churches in southeast Kansas. Following graduation from Southwestern Seminary in Fort

Worth, he moved to Arkansas where he pastored two churches.

A seminary friend who was pastor of a church in Boulder City, Nev., asked him if he would lead a revival there, and that's how he was introduced to the state. It turned out to be a fateful meeting.

While there he met Neal Myers, who was serving as director of missions in Reno, and planted the idea of Bryant moving to the state to help struggling churches. He came as a pastor and within a few years stepped into his current position as associational missionary.

"It's hard for a church to have a full-time pastor out here because the congregations are so small and the income sources are relatively scarce. By far, most of our churches are bivocational in nature.

"We have a broad range of pastors in our association. We have a 70-year-old who has been in the ministry for 50 years and we have others who have only been in the pastorate for two or three years. Churches will range in size from 10 or 12 members to 120 being our largest congregation. I'd say the average size is 40," he explains.

Nevada is among the fastest growing states in the nation, and the need for lay leadership grows with each year. Fallon is expected to double its population to 50,000 by 2010. It has one of the Navy's largest pilot training bases since the Top Gun school was moved there.

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Jesus: More Than a Prophet

Mark 8:27-30; Acts 3:17-26

By Rick Henson

Jesus and the disciples were in the northern part of Israel, near the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had healed many sick, fed over 5,000 people with a few loaves of bread and a few pieces of fish, walked on the water, and taught the disciples. After the disciples saw all this, Jesus asked them, "Who do people say that I am?" They answered that people were saying that Jesus was a prophet, another John the Baptist, or Elijah. Any of these answers would have flattered anyone else.

To be recognized as a prophet of God would truly be an awesome affirmation to any preacher. To be compared with John the Baptist was also quite a compliment. Jesus himself referred to John the Baptist in Matthew 11:11 by saying that no one was as

great as he. In Malachi 4:5 God spoke through the prophet Malachi that he would send Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord. To be considered the forerunner of the "day of the Lord" would swell the head of the most humble servant of God.

Jesus did not accept these compliments, however. He asked the disciples, who had just witnessed Jesus calm a storm, cast out demons, and speak firsthand about the Father, "But who do you say that I am?"

Peter, the self-appointed spokesman for the chosen, answered with no hesitation; "You are the Christ." Our word "Christ" is taken directly from the Greek language. The Greek word used in this passage is, "kristos" and it is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word



Henson

for Messiah. Peter was answering that Jesus is the Messiah. The Jews reading this passage would instantly know that the Messiah referred to the One promised of God over hundreds of years in the Old Testament books. Jesus was much more than a prophet; He was the One of whom the prophets spoke.

The question about the nature of character of Jesus continues today. People still ask who Jesus is. Some religions name Jesus specifically as a prophet. Other religions recognize that he was a great teacher. Many people in America view Jesus as a great religious leader who said and did great things.

Those who knew Him the best saw much more than just a great teacher or leader. They witnessed far more than just a man who spoke about what God would one day do. These disciples, the ones who traveled from town to town with Jesus, who heard His words

and saw His deeds, recognized that He was God Himself.

Several years after this confession in Mark 8, Peter would stand in Jerusalem and preach to the huge crowd gathered for Pentecost from all over the Mediterranean. Peter spoke there with absolute certainty about Jesus. To Peter, Jesus was not some historical figure. Jesus had been his companion for three years. He had witnessed Jesus being arrested, beaten, scourged, and finally crucified. For three days the disciples hid from the Romans. They were afraid and worried that maybe they were next. They did not expect Jesus to return. No one returns from the dead, but Jesus did.

When Peter spoke at Pentecost as described in the second chapter of Acts, and then again at the Temple in the third chapter, he did not describe a prophet, but a Savior. He did not describe some historical figure, but the risen Lord. Peter wrote years later about Jesus in 2 Peter 1:16-18: "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales

when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased'— and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

As Jesus asked the disciples that question, so the Spirit of God asks each of us the same, "Whatever others say about Jesus, who do you say that He is?" Each person must answer that question. According to the Scriptures, eternity depends on our answer. John 3:18 reads, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Jesus is more than a prophet. He is your Savior.

Rick Henson is pastor of Oakdale Baptist Church, Brandon.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Accepting God's Assignment

Jeremiah 1: 4-15a, 17-19

By Billie Buckley

Are you and I related to Jeremiah? If your answer is a resounding "yes", we may be kin. Is there anybody unable to cope today? Ever wanted to grab the controls of your life (if you could find them) and rewind your triumphs; pause in your happiness; erase your struggles; or just push the off button?

Surely we have. All have struggled to stand in troubled times, even as Jeremiah did throughout the captivity of Israel. For around 40 years he watched with the sad, seeing heart of a prophet as people disregarded God's warnings. In this book of messages, with no chronological order, we are shown God judging with a sorrowful, weeping heart.

In the public's eye Jeremiah was fearless; by himself, alone in God's presence, he met discour-

agement and resentment. Did I hear you whisper, "Me, too?"

Following him through the captivity of the Southern Kingdom of Israel, among the survivors in Judah and those who fled to Egypt, we hear God saying, "Come back to me. Give me the controls of your life." We need, as Jeremiah did, to be reminded of our assignment, our equipment, our confirmation, and our assurance.

Let's "pause" in remembering our divine assignments. (vv. 4-5) God's assignment for Jeremiah was clear. It was based on God's knowing and choosing him to be one with a troubling assignment. The message and the messenger became one after hearing God's word. It seems to me, "one" must be God's favorite number. Remember Jesus' prayer in John, "I pray they may become one, even



Buckley

as we are one."

Jeremiah had been chosen before time began for his special assignment. Yet, this in no way lessened his personal freedom of action. Likewise, Israel was chosen for a special assignment by God. She abandoned her assignment by choosing not to destroy old wells before digging new ones, thus leading to her downfall.

Let's "rewind" until we locate equipment for divine energy. (vv. 6-10) Amazing, but here we find the equipment located in none other than God Himself. God touched the prophet's mouth with His words. Then in vv. 7-9, compensating for Jeremiah's honest feelings of insufficiency, He energized and equipped him with: His divine sending out; His divine speaking; His divine encouragement. God is still in the touching business. You know that touch, don't you? Sure you do. It really is all about God.

Not only do we see Jeremiah, but we see God's character in vv. 8-10: all know-

ing, keeper of His word, wise builder eliminating corruption before new work begins. This truth fits troubled times of that day and our day. God's divine energy is still available.

Let's push the "erase" button on everything but our recollection of the divine confirmation. (vv. 11-15b) As we erase all the excuses, we see clearly from Jeremiah, word pictures of God's confirmation. The almond tree and the boiling pot are two symbols of what would be accomplished through Jeremiah's ministry.

The Hebrew for the almond tree is the awakening tree, the first to awaken in spring. Here we find God confirming His alertness and activity in watching over His Word and His own. This is not a name-it-and-claim-it-mentality which results in an insult to God. It is a confirmation coming from a love relationship of abiding and obeying as Jeremiah had.

The second confirmation was one of sorrow because Israel did not take God seriously. He would bring a boiling pot (Babylon) as a source of his

judgment. judgment coming from God's heart of sorrow.

Let's push the "play" button with assurance in God's divine availability and not our ability. (vv. 17-19) To play or put something in action, we have to obey verse 17: "Arise and tell them what I told you." Stop dreaming, planning, meditating. There comes a time when God blesses action. Here God is stabbing Jeremiah's hesitation. Today if we hesitate maybe it is because we have lost our assurance in God's assignment. God never sat in heaven and merely dreamed about having a relationship with his rebellious children. He left heaven and came to Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. Was it difficult? Yes.

This study is about God and about Jeremiah becoming one with his assignment in troubled times. It is also about you and me and our oneness with God's purpose for our lives through troubled times. To make this work, give Him the controls of your life.

Buckley is a member of Petal-Harvey Church, Petal.

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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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Tentmaker sculpts churches in barren land

PAVILLION, Wyo. (Special) — With the deft skill of a trained artisan, Terrell O'Brien selects a sculpting tool and places it on the subject. As he cuts here, smooths there, adds clay or takes it away, the design he has in mind begins to take shape.

When he has completed the sculpture in this small version, he is ready to begin work on what will become a larger-than-life version. O'Brien is an artist who produces monumental sculptures for clients across North America. His subjects may include historical figures, children, Western themes, biblical characters or wildlife — his favorite.

"After completing the clay models, I make the molds which a foundry will use to cast these works in bronze," he says as he takes a break from his work.

When the phone rings and he begins talking with one of his church members, however, his real love comes into play. His calling to bivocational ministry is what drives his life, and his love of art is what provides his income. Without Terrell's studio it would be difficult to support his wife Vickie and family in a state where jobs are hard to come by.

The couple, Mission Service Corps missionaries with the North American Mission Board (NAMB), are being featured during the March 6-13 Week of Prayer and North American Mission Study, which this year focuses on the theme Answer His Call.

"I was raised in West Texas, and attended a rural church that had a strong heart for missions. That church gave to missions, taught missions and participated in missions. God used all of this to put a call on my life," he says.

In college he studied commercial art and biology because he wanted to be a medical illustrator, but after graduation Terrell returned to farming while keeping in touch with his artistic side. Today he sees how God laid a foundation for that to be his primary source of income while serving Him.

He and Vickie were married in 1976 and participated in several mission trips. He began sculpting in the early 80s and eventually decided to leave farming to see where his art career would go. "God was at work in this career move in a bigger way than I knew," he says when thinking back through the years.

"I wondered a lot of times why I made that career shift and was discouraged on several occasions, but I never quit. Then my health began to seriously deteriorate with a hypothyroid condition and God used that to confront me with His call to missions," he says.

During a large sculpting project, O'Brien received a call from a foundry in Wyoming.

"God began to point the way very clearly to Wyoming. I think Vickie was pretty shocked when I came home one day with the question, 'What would you think of moving to Wyoming?' I called John Herrington, the director of missions and evangelism for the Wyoming Southern Baptist Convention, and he encouraged us to come and help."

During the summer of 1995, he and Vickie applied for Mission Service Corps status as they refined their calling through lay-ministry. That's when they discovered the role Tentmakers play in missions — those who provide their own funding in order to pursue their calling.

At first their four children were reluctant to consider such a move, but they trusted their parents as they, in turn, trusted God.

That's how the family came to live and minister in the small town of Pavillion, and opened O'Brien Studio in nearby Lander.

Wyoming is a beautiful, but harsh land, he says. It's a hard place to minister because it is big, wide-open country with a lot of distance between places. "I was raised in Texas where Southern Baptists and other denominations have churches everywhere you look, but out here so many people don't want to have anything to do with church. We only have 90 Southern Baptist churches in the entire state," he explains.

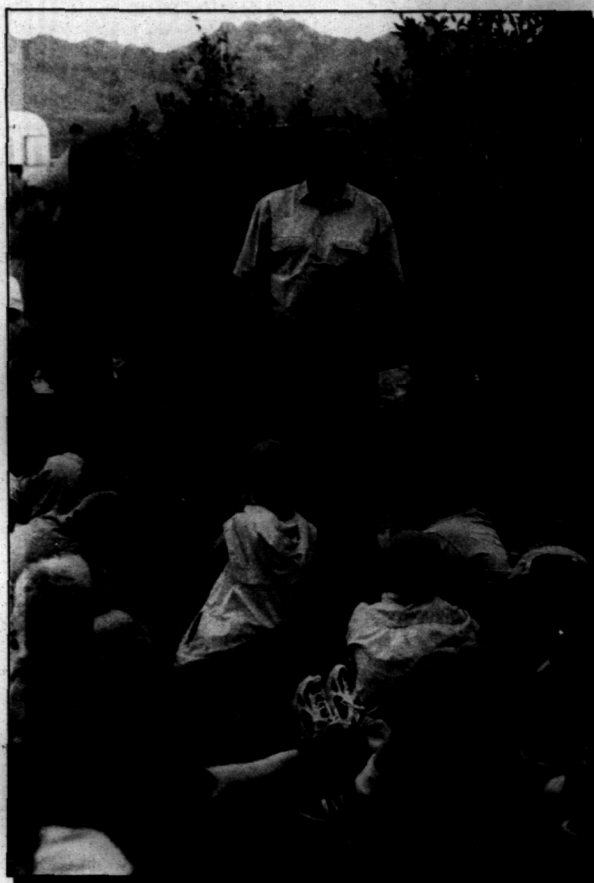
"The people are difficult to reach because they come from so many different backgrounds and share a common western independent mindset. They feel they don't need anything or anyone — including God — to help them survive."

The barrier between the Native American and the Anglo culture is very real and is complicated by the Native American religion. The type of welfare system in place on the reservation also offers little in the way of motivation and often fosters an attitude of hopelessness. "Before I moved here I felt that most everyone knew the Lord and had some experience in a church family, because of the culture in which I grew up in Texas," he explains.

Terrell says he could not do it without the help of Vickie. "For the past two years we have provided school supplies for Wind River Elementary School and that has had a much greater impact than we first expected," Vickie O'Brien says.

"Many of these children come from low-income families, and their parents cannot afford all of the school supplies. The school secretary has expressed to me how very much the parents appreciate what we do. We supply every item on each child's list, from crayons to rulers to paper."

"One of the teachers said that it is so nice to ask the children to get out their markers, and every child has them."



CHANGING LIVES — Missionary Terrell O'Brien leads a Bible study with boys attending a Royal Ambassador camp in Wyoming where he pastors a small but growing church and supports himself as a professional sculptor. His ministry is supported by gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. (Special photo)

Collegiate missionary defines success: Obedience

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (Special) — Jonathan Pettigrew doesn't remember anything about his 100-foot fall down a Colorado mountain in December 2002. He, instead, relies on the accounts of friends who watched over his broken body during the two-hour wait for rescue personnel.

Now, less than three years since his near-fatal descent of Cheyenne Canyon near Colorado Springs, the Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) director at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI), shares with college students many of the lessons he's learned throughout his miraculous recovery.

Pettigrew, a US/C-2 missionary with the North American Mission Board (NAMB), is being featured during the 2005 Week of Prayer for North American Missions, March 6-13. He is among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. The theme for this year is Answer His Call.

"If you look at everything that happened, I should be dead, or I should be brain damaged, or I should be paralyzed," Pettigrew says. "Those are the three options that are common from these types of injuries and this type of trauma."

When Pettigrew landed face down on the canyon floor, he had shattered his right hip and broken his neck, pelvis, right leg, and left kneecap. Doctors suspect the cold air that enveloped the mountain range after sundown lowered his body temperature, likely preventing

him from bleeding to death. At the same time, had rescuers arrived a few minutes later, Pettigrew most likely would have died of hypothermia.

Following the accident, doctors predicted it might take two years for Pettigrew to walk again under his own power but five months later, he walked across a stage to receive his diploma from Angelo State University in Texas.

Still, the 23-year-old, who had been training for competition in a triathlon prior to the accident, is hesitant to describe the perilous turn of events as "life changing." Instead, he prefers to explain his improbable journey as "life shaping."

"My God is way too sovereign to have to change His plans for my life," Pettigrew says. "Who I am is what God has built into me from the accident. It's part of me. It's not just an event. God has taught me so many things."

A three-week stay in the hospital followed by 10 months in a neck brace, including four months confinement to a wheelchair, provided Pettigrew plenty of time to re-examine his priorities and goals in life.

"I want people to rejoice and understand that we serve an all-powerful God who is sovereign over details, like medical things and circumstances, and I want that to motivate others to trust God, to trust Him explicitly in everything."

It's that same conviction and mindset that shapes Pettigrew's ministry on the 28,000-student IUPUI campus where he is establishing the school's first Southern Baptist student organization.



CAMPUS MINISTRY — US/C2 missionary Jonathan Pettigrew studies his Bible on the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis, where his campus ministry reaches out to more than 28,000 students. His ministry is supported by gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. (Special photo)

Answer
His Call **Tell**
His Story **Change**
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